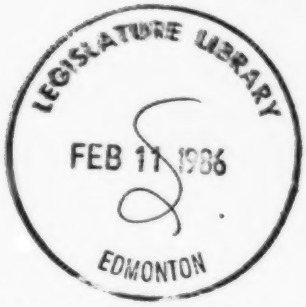
SCHOOL FINANCE



HOW EDUCATION IS FUNDED

BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

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Finance and Administration
Alberta Education

SCHOOL FINANCE

How Education Is Funded By The Government of Alberta

Introduction

The Government of Alberta provides more than $1.3 billion each year to school boards across the province, reflecting the high priority that government gives to education. This level of funding for education ranks high in Canada, and in North America. Alberta is proud of this commitment to education.

The government's commitment to basic education emphasizes a high level of support for existing instructional programs from Early Childhood Services to Grade 12 as well as provides funds to school boards for the special needs of students, (including the disabled and exceptional), for the improvement or enhancement of programs, and for greater fiscal equalization to ensure greater equality of opportunity.

Over 80% of the funds distributed by Government is provided through the School Foundation Program Fund and the remaining 20% is distributed through special funding under the Department of Education Act. The funding for the various grants and support programs is intended to ensure that students receive the high quality of education that Albertans have learned to expect from their schools.

This brochure is intended to provide you with an overview of these grants and support programs. For more detailed information, please contact the office of your local school jurisdiction, the Financial and Administrative Services Branch of Alberta Education, or the Regional Office of Education closest to you. (Addresses are listed on the back panel.)

Management and Finance Plan

The Management and Finance Plan (MFP), introduced in 1984, is a major initiative of Alberta Education, intended to improve the approach to managing and financing of education in Alberta.

The structure and method of educational funding have been streamlined to give more authority and flexibility to local school jurisdictions in the use of provincial funds to meet the educational needs of their students.

While jurisdictions now have greater responsibility, more flexibility and discretion in the delivery of programs, they are also expected to be more accountable to their electorate and the public. Annual reports and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programs and services are required, with greater emphasis upon educational results. The community has further opportunities to become more involved in the decision-making process, emphasizing cooperation and partnership at all levels.

Most of the grants and funding structures described in this brochure have been simplified or streamlined as part of the MFP initiative in order to improve the quality of education provided to Albertans.

School Foundation Program Fund

1. Basic Per Pupil Instructional Grants

A major portion of government funding to school boards is distributed through basic per pupil grants to support instructional programs in schools for students enrolled in Grades 1 to 12. In 1984, 422,890 students were enrolled in Grades 1 to 12.

In 1985, public and separate school boards will receive the following basic instructional grants:

- $1,776 for each eligible elementary student
- $1,876 for each eligible junior high student
- $2,104 for each eligible senior high student

2. Transportation Grants

Provincial funding to public and separate school boards is made available to support student transportation services in rural and urban areas as well as to support special circumstances relating to parental transportation, boarding allowances, and special transportation for handicapped students.

Boards are eligible for a transportation grant if the student lives at least 2.4 km from the school. Boards in rural areas receive grants to operate school buses and the support is based on distances, the number of days the service operates and the number of students served. Boards of city school districts receive a flat grant per student per year for costs incurred in transporting students to school. (Such costs may include providing school buses or issuing bus passes for the use of public transportation and transportation in lieu of building.)

All school boards are eligible to receive special support grants for: transporting severely handicapped students (with no distance restrictions); parental transportation of regular students to a school or bus route (based on an eligible distance formula); and boarding allowances for students living away from home.

3. School Buildings Support

Provincial funding is provided to support new school construction, modernization of existing schools and the Building Quality Restoration Program (BQRP) for public and separate school boards.

The intent of the 1984-88 capital funding plan is to foster local planning, financial equity, and maximum utilization of existing school space. Capital funding will be provided for new construction where the health or safety of children is at stake, where no space is available and other alternatives do not exist, and where existing space cannot accommodate the mandated changes to educational programs or the current educational program. Funding for school modernization projects which are designed to meet current educational program requirements or to accommodate transported students is also available.

The Building Quality Restoration Program provides support to remediate health, safety or acute structural deficiencies in buildings, including support for energy conservation and business education equipment such as computers. Also, support is provided to preserve the quality of school building components and to improve the exterior of school facilities.

The School Buildings Board determines the amount of provincial support for each project within a provincial priority system by means of a funding formula. All other costs over the established basic provincial support level are the responsibility of the local school board. Projects are usually financed through debenture borrowing from the Alberta Municipal Finance Corporation after prior approval of the Local Authorities Board. Projects financed through short-term capital loans must receive approval from the Minister of Education.

Special Funding Under The Department of Education Act

1. Equity Grant

The new equity grant is designed to equalize the fiscal capabilities of school boards throughout the province to compensate for the factors which create inequities between jurisdictions and which are beyond the control of school boards. The new grant will distribute funds on the basis of fiscal capacity (comparative tax base or assessment per resident pupil), location in terms of distance from a major centre, and sparsity of pupil population.

This new grant distributes funds previously allocated to the following:

- Supplementary Requisition Equalization Grant (SREG),
- Declining Enrollment Grant,
- Private School Opening Grant to School Boards,
- Small School Assistance Grant,
- Small School Jurisdiction Grant,
- Teacher Location Grant, and
- Teacher Housing Unit Grant.

2. Special Support

In addition to the Equity Grant, the special funding under the Department of Education Act provides supplementary support to basic education covering a range of projects and services. The major grants in this group are described as follows:

a) Educational Opportunities Fund (EOF)

This fund supports educational projects designed to improve the quality of education in Grades 1 to 12 to alleviate the effects of adverse social and economic conditions upon the educational attainment of students.

Proposals for projects must be approved by Alberta Education and must be designed to satisfy broad program guidelines set by the province. Local school boards are responsible for planning and carrying out their own projects.

b) Vocational Education Grants

Provincial grants are available to school boards for the provision of approved vocational education programs at the senior high school level.

c) Extension Program Grants

School Extension Program Grants are available to school boards for the provision of educational services for persons who are beyond school age or who for other reasons are not able to attend school during regular hours. Such extension programs may include: adult basic education, regular day, evening or summer extension, and special education extension.

d) Language Program Grants

Language Program Grants are available to school boards to support programs in which French is used as a language of instruction, in which French is learned as a second language, in which the language of instruction is a language other than English or French. As well, special assistance in learning English as a Second Language is provided to pupils recently arrived in Alberta in order to enable them to follow instruction in English.

e) Community School Grant

This grant is intended to assist boards in the implementation and operation of Designated Community Schools which would enable people to meet their educational, recreational, cultural, social and other needs within their communities. The grant to a board is to support the costs of providing leadership services, secretarial services and supplies, community use, and other costs associated with the operation of a Designated Community School.

f) Special Education Funding

Prior to 1984, Special Education funding was allocated out of four main areas: Program Unit Grant, Category II Private Schools, Out of Province Placement, and Special Education Teaching Positions. In 1984, Alberta Education revised the method of distributing funds to school boards for programs and services in special education. The new funding formula for special education is based on $138 (1985) per resident pupil in Grades 1 to 12. The funding approach is intended to ensure greater equity across the province and to give more flexibility and responsibility for local school boards in providing special education programs, including programs for the gifted. Local school boards, within provincial policies, are responsible for allocating special education grants and for deciding what type of programs to provide, when, where, and how.

g) Teacher Inservice Grant

The grant is available to school boards to support professional development programs for teachers involving eligible inservice activities.

h) **Intern Teacher Grant**

Provincial funding is available to school boards to provide support for the placement of intern teachers in a classroom for observation and experience under the direct supervision of a certificated teacher.

3. Early Childhood Services (ECS)

Private ECS operators and school boards offering ECS programs will be eligible to receive $1,037 for each eligible registered child in 1985. In addition to this basic grant, ECS operators will be eligible to receive additional funds for each child designated as handicapped or living in a disadvantaged area. (Disadvantaged areas are those geographical areas so designated by the Deputy Minister as having health, environment or educational conditions which could adversely affect children and their families.) ECS operators may be eligible to receive other financial support based on the number of hours in the program and the number of children enrolled, or grants to maintain small centres where transportation to larger centres is not practical.

Transportation grants for children registered in government-approved ECS programs are available to school boards and private operators with no restriction on distances. These grants cover the following situations:

- transportation of children living outside a city school district boundaries,
- transportation of children living within the city school district boundaries, with the prior approval of the Minister,
- transportation of handicapped children who require special transportation, and
- home visits by a teacher or teacher's aide for instruction in an approved in-home program.

Capital grants are provided to ECS operators for the purposes of purchasing furniture and equipment to set up an ECS instructional area, and to upgrade or modify a building to comply with provincial or local health and safety standards.

4. Private Schools

Private schools which are approved for funding by Alberta Education will receive in 1985:

- $1,290 for each elementary student
- $1,360 for each junior high students
- maximum of $1,525 for each senior high student

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